

Digital language teacher professional development in online community of practice: Indonesia-Vietnam perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates digital language teacher professional development (TPD) within online communities in Indonesia and Vietnam, employing Pinar's currere framework to identify optimal practices. Through qualitative methods, including interviews and observations, this study examined the experiences of English language educators navigating digital education in these countries. The findings indicate that, while both nations emphasize the significance of digital literacy, educators encounter challenges in acquiring essential digital competencies due to limited resources and infrastructure. Online communities of practice (CoPs) function as valuable platforms for knowledge dissemination, peer support, and professional growth, enabling teachers to enhance their digital proficiency. However, issues such as internet accessibility, time constraints, and language barriers persist as obstacles. This investigation underscores the necessity for tailored TPD programs that address these specific challenges, ultimately fostering effective integration of technology into language instruction.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution in education has brought about both advantageous prospects and difficulties for language teachers, particularly in emerging nations such as Vietnam and Indonesia. In these situations, language teachers are facing the challenge of acquiring digital proficiency in order to successfully incorporate technology into their teaching methods, while also dealing with obstacles such as limited availability of dependable internet, inadequate training materials, and the difficulty of adapting conventional teaching approaches to digital platforms [1]. Teachers are faced with the challenge of both mastering new tools and technologies and always developing and adjusting their teaching methods to meet the changing demands of their students [2]–[4].

The Vietnamese government acknowledges the importance of digital literacy for teachers and students and has undertaken initiatives to revamp the education system by using more technology [5]. Nevertheless, research has emphasized the persistent difficulties that Vietnamese educators encounter in acquiring the essential digital competencies to effectively utilize technology for language teaching [6], [7]. In Indonesia, language teachers are currently adapting to online and blended learning contexts, which has

exposed deficiencies in their digital pedagogical skills [1]. Academic scholars have urged educational administrators to offer increased assistance and opportunities for professional growth to aid teachers in acquiring the necessary competencies to thrive in the digital era.

An effective strategy for tackling these difficulties is the establishment of online communities of practice (CoPs), where language teachers can participate in cooperative learning, webinars and online workshop, peer feedback, online resource repository, research and publication, and exchange optimal methods for incorporating technology into their teaching [1]. Online CoPs can allow language teachers to enhance their digital competence and overcome challenges in the digital transformation of language education by creating a friendly and collaborative environment [1], [8]–[10]. In situations where formal professional development opportunities are scarce, these online CoPs can offer a platform for teachers to exchange ideas, resources, and experiences, which can be especially beneficial. Through engagement in these communities, language teachers can get valuable perspectives on cutting-edge pedagogical techniques, obtain constructive evaluations of their methodologies, and remain informed about the most recent breakthroughs in educational technology. Furthermore, CoPs can foster a sense of professional camaraderie and alleviate the sense of seclusion that often plagues educators in distant or underprivileged regions. In conclusion, the combined knowledge and assistance provided by these communities can facilitate the implementation of digital tools in language teaching, resulting in enhanced results for teachers and students [1], [9], [11].

Prior research has investigated many facets of online communities and the enhancement of professional skills for language educators. Baran and Correia [12] examined the involvement and active involvement of English language instructors in online CoPs, emphasizing the aspects that impact their professional growth. Bostancioglu [13] examined the feasibility of online CoPs as a substitute for conventional teacher professional development (TPD), with the Webheads in Action community serving as a specific example. Liljekvist *et al.* [14] examined the extent of teacher collaboration in subject-specific Facebook groups. Although there is an increasing amount of research on online CoPs and technology professional development for language teachers, there is still a significant lack of understanding regarding the particular contexts and optimal methods for digital language TPD in developing countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia.

However, these studies predominantly concentrate on situations that are not related to Vietnam and Indonesia, or fail to precisely tackle the distinct issues and opportunities that exist in these nations. Research is required to examine how language instructors in Vietnam and Indonesia manage their digital TPD given the limitations of resources, varied levels of digital literacy, and diverse educational settings. Furthermore, the current body of literature does not provide a thorough understanding of the most effective methods for deploying digital technology for public distribution system in these developing nations, taking into account their unique socio-economic and technological environments.

This study addresses the research gap by examining optimal methods for digital language TPD in online communities, considering the distinct socio-economic and technological settings of Vietnam and Indonesia. This research adopts a context-specific and comparative approach, in contrast to prior studies that concentrated on industrialized nations or offered generalized findings. It underscores the distinct problems and opportunities in these 2 developing countries, providing insights applicable to analogous educational contexts. The paper analyzes the experiences of language teachers from Vietnam and Indonesia, identifying similarities and variations to derive best practices relevant to other regions encountering analogous technology and educational limitations.

Additionally, this study employs duo ethnography, a relatively novel research method in digital TPD studies, to provide rich, dialogic insights into teachers' experiences, challenges, and professional development strategies. This methodological advancement facilitates a more profound investigation of professional identity formation and the influence of digital learning settings. The research underscores the significance of online CoPs in assisting language educators, providing actionable techniques and frameworks for implementation by educators and policymakers to improve digital TPD. This research enhances professional development and promotes the appropriate use of technology into teaching methods, enabling language educators in Vietnam and Indonesia to succeed in the digital age.

This study has 3 main goals: i) to find the best ways to teach digital languages in Vietnam and Indonesia; ii) to find useful strategies and frameworks that can improve student outcomes by looking at the experiences and points of view of language teachers in various settings, with a focus on improving digital skills; and iii) to learn more about how digital language teaching programs can be changed to meet the needs of teachers in developing countries. Ultimately, this research contributes to fostering professional development and facilitating the effective integration of technology into pedagogical approaches.

2. METHOD

This article employed duo ethnography [15], [16], a collaborative research method, to describe the experiences of 2 developing English language teaching (ELT) professionals from diverse linguistic and

cultural contexts. Duo ethnography was based on a dialogic approach, in which collaborators investigated a concept or shared experience with the intention of generating new understandings or fostering change. Thus, we considered the dialogic foundations of duo ethnography to be particularly suitable for investigating the dialogic construction of identities and themes in the field of ELT instruction.

In developing this duo ethnography, we were particularly drawn to Pinar's concept of *currere* [17]. According to Pinar [17], the method of *currere* consisted of 4 stages: regression, progression, analysis, and synthesis, as shown in Table 1. In these phases, the authors created a "digital language TPD in online community" by "outlining the best practices in the past, present, and future." The participants of this study were 2 English lecturers from Dong Thap University and 2 English lecturers from Universitas Halu Oleo.

The experiences of 2 emerging ELT professionals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in Vietnam and Indonesia were examined in this duo-ethnography. The integration of digital technology into education presented distinct problems for Vietnam and Indonesia, as both were developing nations with differing degrees of digital literacy, infrastructure constraints, and socio-economic inequities. The emphasis on Universitas Halu Oleo in Indonesia and Dong Thap University in Vietnam permitted a comparative investigation of the approaches taken to digital language TPD in 2 disparate but comparable educational environments. The study intended to identify the best practices for digital TPD in situations where resources might have been scarce but the necessity for efficient technology integration was critical by looking at the experiences of English lecturers from various schools.

The participating English lecturers from Dong Thap University and Universitas Halu Oleo collaborated to perform the duo-ethnography. Using a dialogic approach, the instructors in this technique explored their common experiences and viewpoints on digital TPD through a series of dialogues and reflections. Speakers from the 2 schools exchanged ideas with one another via webinars, social media, and guest lectures. The 4 steps of Pinar's *currere* concept, namely regression, progression, analysis, and synthesis, were employed by the participants.

To collect the data, the researchers used interviews and observations. In-depth online interviews with the 4 English instructors were the main technique used to collect data. The semi-structured nature of these interviews allowed for flexibility and in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences with digital TPD. The researchers also observed how the lecturers instructed students and interacted with them in virtual CoPs. Contextual information about the integration of digital tools into their teaching techniques was provided by these observations. Besides, the data was rigorously coded and categorized by the researchers using thematic analysis. They identified recurrent themes and patterns in digital TPD methods, obstacles, and results as part of this process.

Table 1. The 4 steps of Pinar's *currere* concept

Steps	To do
Regression	The lecturers think back on their earlier encounters with digital TPD, bringing to mind important occasions and methods that influenced their present comprehension.
Progression	They examine possible breakthroughs and advances that could enhance their professional development as they envisage the future of digital TPD.
Analysis	By identifying important themes and patterns, the lecturers critically examine their own experiences as well as the insights they have obtained from their reflections.
Synthesis	Using a comprehensive perspective of how past experiences and future goals might inform current activities, they integrate their findings to define best practices for digital TPD.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Digital language TPD in online communities practices in Indonesia and Vietnam

This study revealed that in recent years, online professional development for language educators in Indonesia and Vietnam has experienced significant growth due to increased internet accessibility. These online communities, which are accessible via social media platforms, discussion forums, and specialized educational platforms, facilitate the exchange of resources, ideas, and pedagogical methodologies among teachers. Furthermore, the study identified 4 key benefits of online communities: i) accessibility: ease of access and participation, particularly in geographically remote areas; ii) networking: establishing professional connections with fellow language educators; iii) resource sharing: access to a diverse range of instructional materials and pedagogical best practices; and iv) professional growth: enhancement of teaching competencies, expansion of knowledge bases, and awareness of current trends in language education.

Furthermore, the results indicated that online communities provide substantial opportunities for the professional development of language teachers in both Indonesia and Vietnam. Specifically, these communities offer access to valuable resources, facilitate collaboration, and support continuous learning,

thereby enabling teachers to enhance their skills and remain current with contemporary language-teaching methodologies. Through active participation in these communities, teachers can improve their pedagogical practices and enrich their learning experience. The following analysis delineates the similarities and differences between English foreign language (EFL) Vietnam and Indonesia in terms of digital language teachers' professional development in online community experiences. While both nations exhibit comparable motivations for participating in online communities, disparities in their experiences may arise because of factors such as technological accessibility and linguistic barriers.

3.1.1. Vietnamese professional development perspective

In Vietnam, online communities have demonstrated particular efficacy in addressing specific areas of language teaching, notably communication skills and intercultural competences. Communication skills provide resources and opportunities to enhance students' English communication ability. We use intercultural competence to cultivate understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, thereby improving language pedagogy. Furthermore, the study identified benefits for Vietnamese teachers in developing their digital language skills through online communities, which include: i) professional growth: sharing experiences, strategies, and materials to enhance teaching practices; ii) networking: establishing relationships with peers and seeking support; and iii) learning opportunities: access online workshops, webinars, and resources.

Regarding online communities, the study found that EFL teachers demonstrated proficiency and familiarity with Facebook groups and online workshops organized by institutions. Vietnamese language teachers also use online communities for professional development, focusing on areas such as English communication skills and intercultural competence. These platforms facilitate the exchange of ideas, enhancement of communication skills, and improved understanding of cultural differences. Active participation in such communities has augmented teachers' capacity to foster effective language-learning environments for their students. For instance, numerous Vietnamese educators have participated in Facebook groups and webinars to exchange educational techniques and acquire new insights. Educators such as Ms. Anh and Ms. Tho emphasized the convenience of online workshops and webinars, which provide flexibility and access to essential teaching resources without necessitating travel. They also underscored the importance of establishing relationships with peers in online forums for their ongoing support and development.

Our findings align with Vu [18] investigation, which posits that intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and sensitivity influence students' engagement in international partnerships. Furthermore, our findings corroborate those of Vu and Dinh [19], who asserted that ICC facilitates students' discovery and interaction with new cultures as well as their ability to mitigate misunderstandings through negotiation. Online communities also contribute to the development of ICC competency.

3.1.2. Indonesian professional development perspective

Online communities for language teachers are widely prevalent and provide readily accessible opportunities for professional development. These platforms enable educators to share pedagogical strategies, resources, and guidance, which are particularly beneficial in remote areas. For instance, platforms such as English teachers' Indonesia and English language teaching in Indonesia with support (ELTIS) offer forums for collaboration, discussions on teaching methodologies, and expert-led webinars. These forums assist educators in retaining the latest teaching methods and enhancing their instructional practices.

The interview results indicate that several online communities in Indonesia dedicate themselves to the professional development of English language teachers. These platforms facilitate the exchange of resources, discussion of pedagogical methods, and collaboration between educators. Examples include: i) English teachers Indonesia, a forum where educators share resources, seek guidance, and participate in webinars or virtual workshops on topics such as classroom management and technology integration; ii) ELTIS, a Facebook group offering discussions on educational technology, online teaching practices, and evaluation methodologies; and iii) BINUS English language educators, a community that provides webinars and seminars focused on digital tools, blended learning, and communicative language teaching strategies that foster collaboration and support the professional development of English teachers in Indonesia [20]–[22]. We have documented Mrs. A's and Mr. N's experiences of joining online communities. Mrs. A, an English lecturer from Indonesia, participated in the Facebook group teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), and English teachers: resources and jobs. This group functions as a platform for the exchange of materials and information between current and prospective instructors in TESOL and TEFL. It comprises graduates, students, and professionals specializing in teaching English as a second language (ESL) or EFL. However, this group did not intend to acquire any new knowledge or skills.

Similarly, Mr. N, an Indonesian EFL instructor, reported using the Merdeka Mengajar application, a product of the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. This application enables educators to enhance their pedagogical skills and develop competencies. Furthermore, it provides webinars for ongoing professional development and assessments that confer certifications. Online forums in

Indonesia provide support for English-language instructors by offering opportunities for networking, collaboration, and access to educational resources. Through active engagement [23], educators can enhance their instructional methodologies, remain informed about emerging practices, and disseminate their expertise to fellow teaching professionals.

Online communities provide significant opportunities for Indonesian and Vietnamese language teachers' professional development. These platforms provide access to valuable resources, foster collaboration, and support continuous learning, assisting educators in enhancing their skills and maintaining currency with contemporary language-teaching methodologies. Despite certain challenges, the adoption of digital professional development is steadily increasing, thus benefiting both educators and students. In both countries, educators' primary motivation to participate in online communities is to improve their pedagogical skills, expand their knowledge base, and remain informed about the latest trends in language education. These communities foster networking and collaboration, enabling educators to learn from one another and to exchange valuable insights. However, challenges such as limited access to technology and internet connectivity, particularly in rural areas, may impact participation.

3.2. The challenges of professional development for digital language teachers in online communities

The findings revealed that digital language instructors encounter several challenges in online professional development. Significant issues include: i) technological dependence: limited internet access and technical difficulties can impede the learning experience, hindering educators' effective engagement; ii) engagement monitoring: in contrast to in-person settings, online environments present difficulties for instructors in assessing student engagement through nonverbal cues, resulting in classroom management challenges; iii) communication skills and intercultural competence: online platforms often lack opportunities for students to practice the speaking and listening skills that are essential for language development. Cultural differences may also lead to misunderstandings; iv) time constraints: educators frequently have demanding schedules that restrict their ability to participate in online professional development; v) access to technology: in rural areas, limited technology and internet connectivity can impede teachers' participation in online communities; vi) language barriers: a lack of strong English proficiency among educators can hinder their engagement in discussions and resource utilization; vii) technical skills: some instructors may experience difficulties navigating online platforms and utilizing digital tools, limiting their ability to participate fully; viii) workload management: high workloads can prevent teachers from allocating time for professional development; and ix) quality of resources: ensuring the reliability of information in online communities can be challenging, necessitating educators to verify the credibility of shared materials.

Despite these challenges, potential solutions include enhancing internet accessibility in underserved regions, providing training to improve language and technical proficiencies, and establishing localized online communities to more effectively address teachers' requirements. Vietnam and Indonesia face comparable challenges, including the need to enhance students' communication skills and improve their intercultural comprehension. Online communities can address these issues by facilitating diverse communication opportunities, but obstacles such as engagement levels and reliable internet access remain significant. Despite these challenges, online communities offer valuable opportunities for professional development in both countries. Furthermore, our results strongly corroborate the findings of Warren and Park [16], which indicate that duoenography can facilitate the professional development of EFL practitioners in both domestic and international contexts. Within this framework, EFL educators improve their professional competence by exchanging new insights and knowledge, thereby fostering change. Additionally, Vu and Dinh [19] substantiated that online platforms can serve as effective media for EFL instructors to enhance their professional skills, particularly in developing ICC competencies among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

3.3. Best practices of digital language TPD in online communities

This study elucidates the optimal practices for digital language teachers' professional development in online communities, emphasizing the advantages of collaboration and resource sharing among educators. In this regard, our findings provide the best practices for digital language TPD in Indonesian online communities.

3.3.1. EFL teacher-specific platform establishment

The results of the study found that one potential strategy is to establish specialized online communities or platforms that cater to language teachers. These platforms would serve as virtual spaces where educators can engage in discussions, exchange information, and collaborate on matters related to their professional growth. This can be accomplished using social media platforms such as Facebook groups or online discussion forums.

3.3.2. Encourage peer-to-peer learning

Advocate language educators to actively disseminate their experiences, achievements, and exemplary methodologies within virtual networks. Media sources like blog posts, video tutorials, or live webinars can accomplish this.

3.3.3. Furnish EFL current resources

It is imperative to furnish language educators with pertinent and current resources, including scholarly articles, research papers, and instructional materials, to facilitate their ongoing professional growth. Online groups can facilitate the sharing of these resources. The incorporation of these best practices can enhance the efficacy of digital language teachers' professional development in Indonesian online communities, thereby facilitating their professional growth and fostering improvements in language instruction.

Relevant to the study's best practices, we strongly endorse the views of [9], [24]–[27], which assert that the development of digital language teachers in online communities necessitates the adoption of diverse best practices for professional development. We aim to achieve this by participating in online CoPs, which provide a platform for teachers to interact, exchange ideas, and work together with other educators. Our results indicate that these communities offer a space for discussions on teaching strategies, exchanging resources, and seeking advice from experienced professionals, in which teachers can engage in discussions about language teaching and learning, sharing valuable insights into effective methodologies and resources to improve their teaching. Teachers gain fresh perspectives, learn new approaches, and incorporate innovative techniques into their classrooms when they network with others.

Furthermore, our research aligns with the findings of [28]–[30], suggesting that the primary strategy for enhancing the professional development of digital language teachers within online communities is to join and actively participate in these communities. These communities provide a wide array of resources, possibilities for collaboration, and opportunities for cross-cultural engagement that have the potential to boost language-teaching abilities. Nevertheless, it is imperative for educators to also consider the constraints and difficulties associated with remote learning and devise strategies to mitigate the divide between virtual and in-person engagement.

4. CONCLUSION

The rising prominence of online professional development communities in Indonesia and Vietnam underscores the escalating demand for accessible and flexible learning opportunities for digital language educators. These communities offer an essential platform for information exchange, networking, and resource-sharing, allowing educators to enhance their pedagogical skills and remain informed about contemporary techniques. Nonetheless, obstacles include restricted access to technology, linguistic difficulties, and the monitoring of engagement continue to exist. To address these issues, enhanced internet infrastructure, regional assistance, and organized professional development programs customized to the specific requirements of language educators in these nations are essential.

The implications of this research are substantial for legislators, educational institutions, and language instructors. Policymakers must prioritize investments in digital education infrastructure, especially in rural regions, to improve the efficacy of online professional development. Institutions must cultivate organized online communities that promote collaboration, while instructors should proactively participate in these networks to enhance their digital skills. By utilizing the optimal practices identified in this study, such as creating teacher-specific platforms, promoting peer learning, and supplying updated educational resources, Vietnamese and Indonesian educators can enhance the integration of technology in language instruction, thereby improving student learning outcomes and professional development.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

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Jamiludin		✓				✓		✓		✓		✓		
Darnawati	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓		✓		✓	
Waode Ade Sarasmita	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
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C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest

DATA AVAILABILITY

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

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